

Planning for and Managing Small Group Instruction

When using small groups, teachers can more easily plan and deliver lessons for multi-level classrooms. Students can learn at their own level and have more opportunities to practice. However, small group instruction requires careful planning and specific classroom management techniques.

In this webinar, we will:

- learn how to plan for small group instruction
- consider how to practice routines with students
- explore how to monitor the whole class while working with small groups



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Adrienne has taught child and adolescent ELLs in rural and inner-city public schools in multiple contexts. She works with new and experienced teachers from diverse backgrounds to support their professional growth.

Adrienne has a master's degree in Education from National Louis University, as well as a master's degree and doctorate in Linguistics from the University of Kansas.



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Planning for and Managing Small Group Instruction



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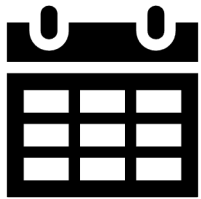
In this session, we will...



...discuss the *benefits* of small group instruction.

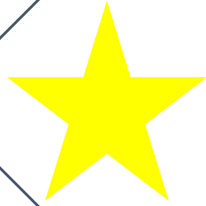


...review the *options* for small group instruction.



...plan for how to successfully *implement* small group instruction.

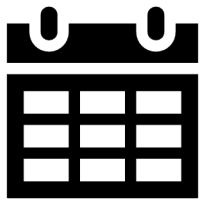
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Your Turn!



Imagine a classroom – you can draw it or visualize it.

1. Where is the teacher's desk?
2. Where are the students' desks?
3. Where is the teacher?
4. What are other important places in the room?

Teaching to the Whole Class - Benefits



What are the *benefits* of teaching the same lesson to the whole class?

- Easier lesson planning
- A quiet classroom
- More time for teacher to teach*

**Maybe...maybe not...*

Teaching to the Whole Class - Negatives



Teaching the same lesson to the whole class is teacher-centered.

What is a “teacher-centered” lesson?

The focus is on the **teacher’s teaching** and the lecture, not the **students’ learning**.

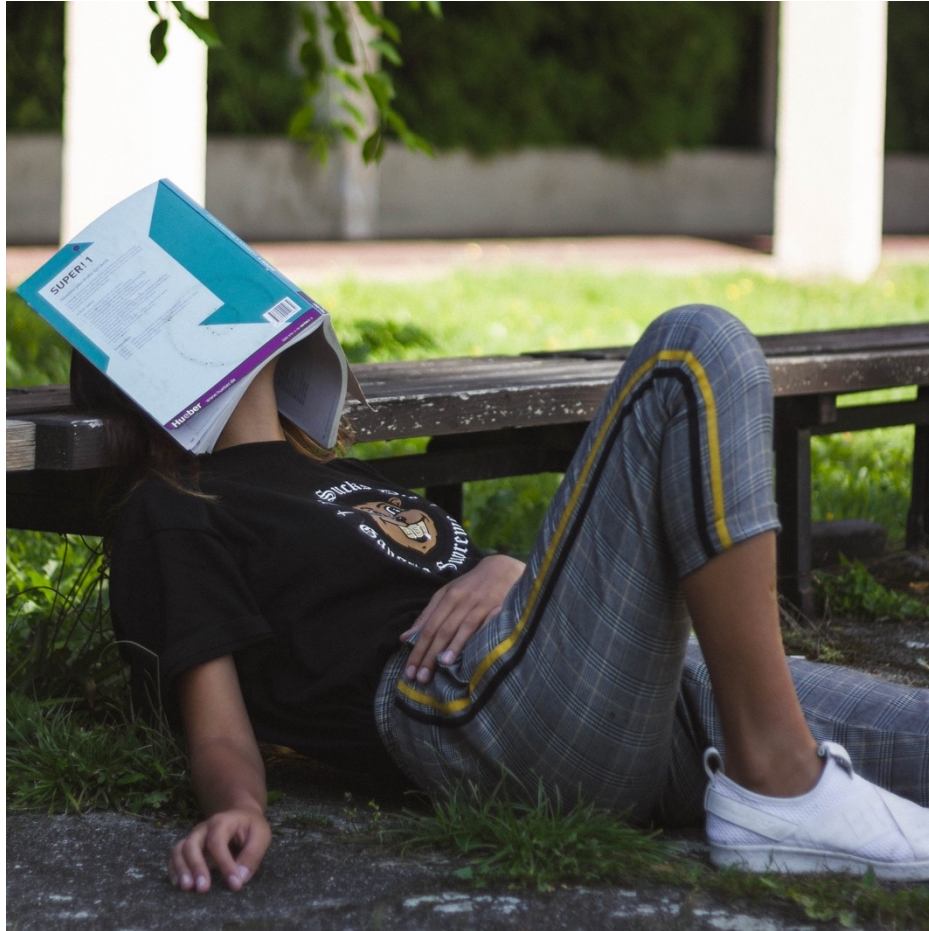
Teaching to the Whole Class - Negatives



What are the *negatives* of teaching the same lesson to the whole class?

- Not all students learn similarly
- Less time for students to practice
- Less student engagement
 - → *Less student interest in the lesson*

Teaching to the Whole Class - Negatives



What are the *negatives* of teaching the same lesson to the whole class?

**A quiet classroom
does not always
mean that every
student is learning!**

Teaching to the Whole Class - Negatives



What are the *negatives* of teaching the same lesson to the whole class?

**Students who are
not learning become
disengaged
(not interested).**

Another Option – Small group instruction!

Definition:

Two (2) or more students working together on an activity, project, assignment, or question.



Another Option – Small group instruction!

- The **students** are thinking, talking, and practicing.
- The **teacher** is monitoring and supporting student learning.



Your Turn!

How can small group instruction help?



CHOOSE ONE SCENARIO!

Sample Answer in CHAT:

A: Small groups will help Ibrahim and Omar because...



Scenario A:

Ibrahim and Omar are always bored in class because the lessons are too easy.



Scenario B:

Teacher Santanina is worried because she doesn't have time to help her lower proficiency students.

Teaching to Small Groups - Benefits

Small group instruction is student-centered.

- Students have more time to practice skills.
- Students can help each other.
- Students will be more engaged and focused on the lesson.

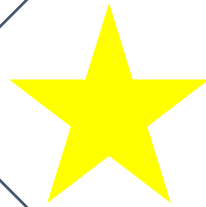
= more learning!



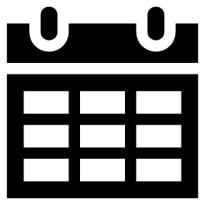
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...review the *options* for small group instruction.



...plan for how to successfully *implement* small group instruction.

Your Turn!



What are some of the challenges for using small group instruction in your classroom?

Planning for Small Group Instruction

What options are physically available in your classroom?
Look at your picture from the beginning of today!

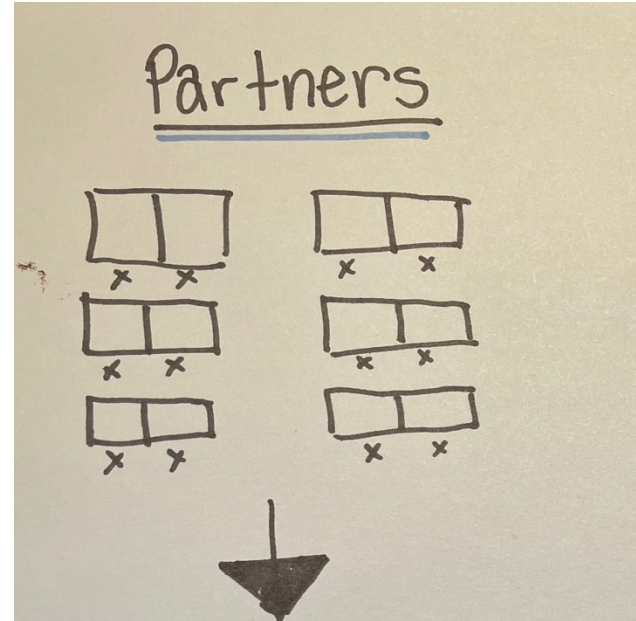
- What can be moved easily?
 - *Desks, chairs, students*
- Is there room for students to sit together or stand together?



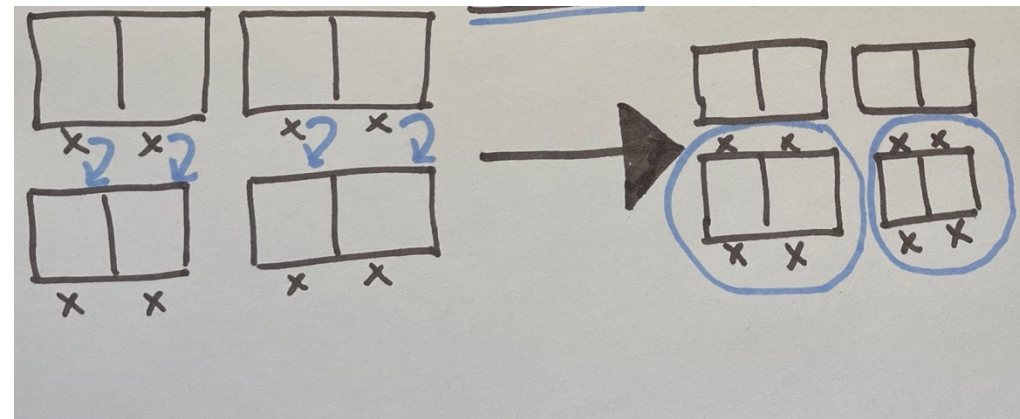
Sample Classroom Arrangements

Partners (2-3 students)

- Best for small space or many students



Flexible: Students can move their chairs or bodies to form larger groups



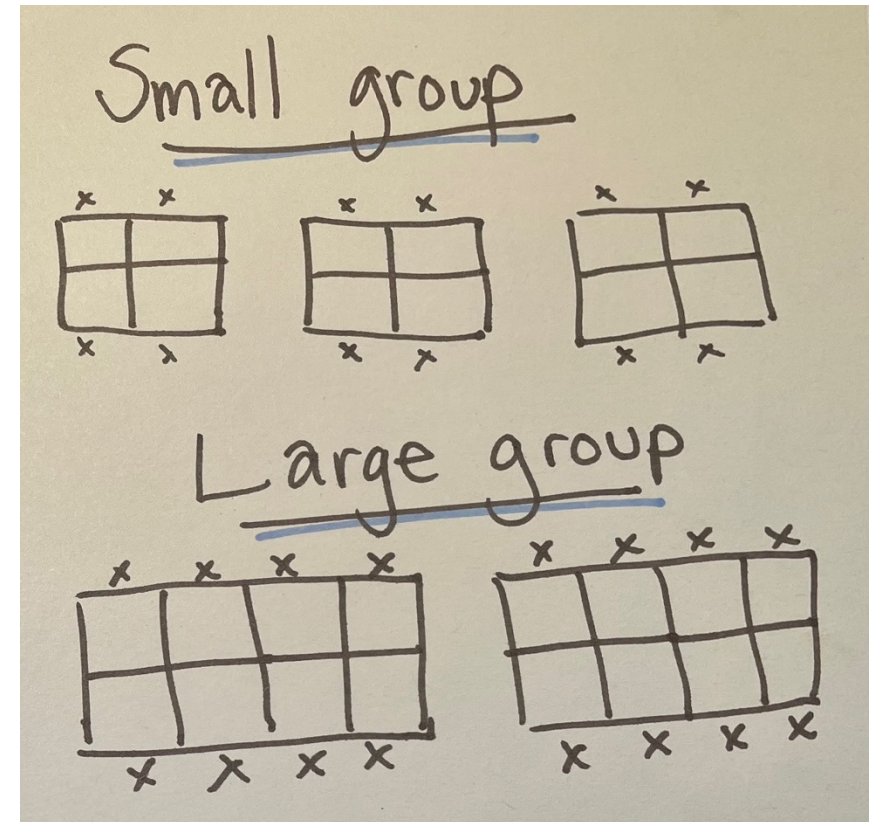
Sample Classroom Arrangements

Small group (4-5 students)

- Best for any age student
- Ideal size for regular small groups

Large group (6-8 students)

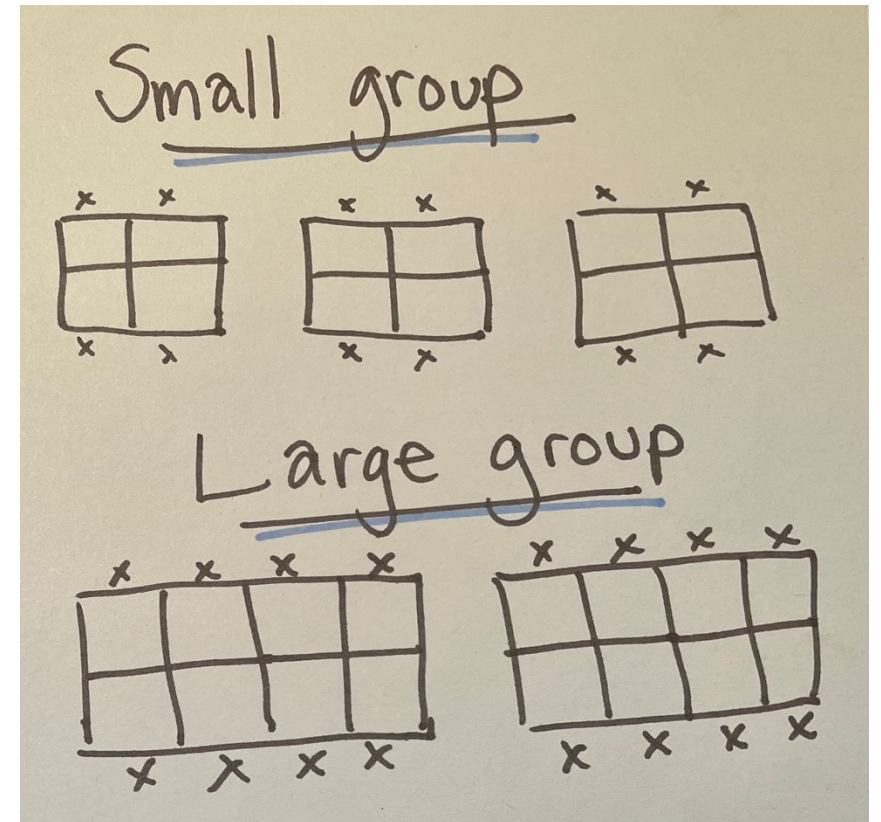
- Best for large classes of older students



Sample Classroom Arrangements

The classroom arrangement depends on:

- the **space** available
- the **number** of students
- your **desks**, *and*
- **how often** you will use small groups



Your Turn!



*How can you create space for
students to work together in
your classroom?*

Options for Small Group Instruction

Partners (2-3 students)



Groups (4-8 students)



Small Group Instruction is FLEXIBLE!



Groups can change for different students or different tasks.

You can change:

- the group size
- the group members
- the physical arrangement of chairs
- the activity
- the time spent in groups
- *...and more!*

Levels of Small Group Instruction (Easy)

Levels	Group Size	Frequency (how often)
1	2-3 students	Once or twice; in <i>some</i> lessons
2	2-3 students	Once or twice; in <i>most</i> lessons
Example: <i>Think, Pair, Share</i> – “Use <i>–ing</i> in a sentence: I am ____-ing.”		



Think, Pair, Share - Directions

Teacher: Ask a question or give a prompt.

Example: "Use -ing in a sentence: I am ____-ing."

Students:

1. THINK of an answer.



2. PAIR - Tell a partner your answer.



3. SHARE your answer with the whole class.



Demonstration: Think, Pair, Share

“Use –ing in a sentence: I am _____-ing.”



- 1. **First**, think of a sentence with –ing.*
- 2. **Next**, turn to a partner (pair) and tell your partner your sentence.*
- 3. **Lastly**, share your answer with the class when I call on you.*

Benefits: Think, Pair, Share

“Use –ing in a sentence: I am _____-ing.”



Benefits for students:

- Low stress practice and peer correction
- Time to practice and build confidence
- All students have an answer (reduce embarrassment)

Levels of Small Group Instruction (Medium)

Levels	Group Size	Frequency (how often)
3	4-8 students	Once or twice; in <i>some</i> lessons
4	4-8 students	Once or twice; in <i>most</i> or <i>every</i> lesson

Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*



PICTURE



WORDS




SENTENCES

Picture Word Inductive Model - Directions

1. Choose an **interesting picture** *that matches your language goals.*
2. Create **small groups** of students.
3. Students create **lists of words** (i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs).
4. Students **share** their words with each other.
5. Students **create sentences** with the words and the target grammar.



Build Vocabulary!



*Practice writing
and speaking
sentences!*

Your turn!



Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*

1. *List nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.*

Your turn!



Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*

1. *List nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.*

Adrienne's Nouns:

Girl
Boy
Tree

Your turn!



Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*

1. *List nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.*

Adrienne's Nouns:

Girl
Boy
Tree

Kate's Nouns:

Shirt
Smile
Leaf
Hat

Your turn!

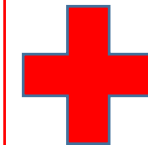


Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*

1. *List nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.*

**Adrienne's
Nouns:**

Girl
Boy
Tree



**Kate's
Nouns:**

Shirt
Smile
Leaf
Hat

Your turn!



Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*

1. *Your turn!*

List nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Your turn!

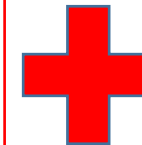


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Adrienne's Nouns:

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Tree



Kate's Nouns:

Shirt
Smile
Leaf
Hat

Your turn!



Example: *Picture Word Inductive Model*

1. *List nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.*
2. *Next, write as many sentences as you can with the words you listed.*

Grammar Practice:

The/A (adjective) + (noun) +
is/are (verb) -ing + (adverb) .

Levels of Small Group Instruction (Expert)

“Permanent” groups:

- Student desks are always in groups.
- The students are trained to work productively in groups.

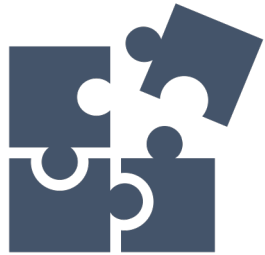


Levels of Small Group Instruction (Expert)

Level	Group Size	Frequency (how often)
5	4-8 students	Permanent groups; <u>similar</u> activities
6	4-8 students	Permanent groups; <u>different</u> levels of activities*
*Small group instruction helps with “ differentiation ”: <i>Giving different activities to different students, based on their level of proficiency and individual needs.</i>		

Differentiation & Adaptation Ideas

- *more or less* questions



OR



- *more or less* help from the teachers



Differentiation & Adaptation Ideas

- different *levels* of texts (“leveled readings”) for HIGH or LOW proficiency groups:

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/four-skills-resources>

→ *Simple vs. complex words, sentences, and topics*

- different *tasks*

- a.
- b.
- c.

**MULTIPLE
CHOICE**



**GRAPHIC
ORGANIZER**



ESSAY

Levels of Small Group Instruction (Expert)

You can **CHANGE** the students in the groups!

- *Option A:* All students are the same proficiency.
- *Option B:* Some students are high proficiency, some are low proficiency.



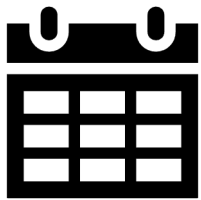
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Planning for Small Group Instruction

Practice your routine.

1. Practice just the movement.
2. Practice with a simple task.
3. Practice with an academic task (same task for whole class).
4. Practice “attention signal”.
5. Advanced:
 - Practice switching groups.
 - Practice with different tasks.



Planning for Small Group Instruction

Practice your routine.

1. Practice just the movement.
2. Practice with a simple task.
3. Practice with an academic task (same task for whole class).
4. Practice “**attention signal**”.
5. Advanced:
 - Practice switching groups or “stations”.
 - Practice with different tasks.

Attention Signals:



- Bell
- Hand sign
- Light
- Clap
- Musical instrument
(*avoid a verbal signal*)

Your Turn!






*What attention
signals do you use?*





The “Routine” for Small Group Instruction

<div>READY</div> <div></div>	<div>“Give me 5!”</div> <div><div><div>1. Eyes ready</div><div>2. Mouths ready</div><div>3. Hands ready</div><div>4. Bodies ready</div><div>5. Materials ready</div></div><div></div></div>


The “Routine” for Small Group Instruction

READY 	<p>“Give me 5!”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eyes ready2. Mouths ready3. Hands ready4. Bodies ready5. Materials ready 
SET 	<p><u>Explain</u> directions → <u>Write directions on the board</u> → <u>Practice</u> or model the activity with one volunteer student → <u>Write the time limit and “attention” signal.</u></p>



The “Routine” for Small Group Instruction

READY 	<p>“Give me 5!”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eyes ready2. Mouths ready3. Hands ready4. Bodies ready5. Materials ready 
SET 	<p>Explain directions → Write directions on the board → Practice or model the activity with one volunteer student → Write the time limit and “attention” signal.</p>
GO 	<p>Give students a specific time for transition to group. Use a visible timer.</p>




The Teacher's Role

<div>BEFORE</div> <div></div>	<div>1. Teach the critical skills to complete the task.</div> <div>2. Practice the <i>routine</i>.</div> <div>3. Explain directions. Write the directions on the board.</div> <div>4. Practice or model the <i>activity</i>.</div>

The Teacher's Role

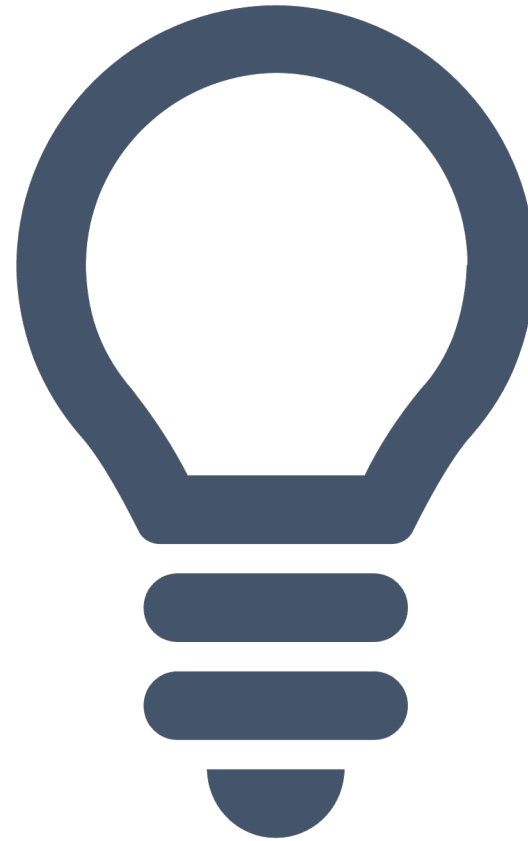
BEFORE 	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teach the critical skills to complete the task.2. Practice the <i>routine</i>.3. Explain directions. Write the directions on the board.4. Practice or model the <i>activity</i>.
DURING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Walk</u> around the class to monitor behavior.• <u>Listen</u> to students and offer support.• Provide positive comments, points, or rewards for good work.• <i>Advanced: Work with a small group who needs extra help.</i>

The Teacher's Role

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After 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide positive comments and reinforcement.• Ask some students or groups to share their work.• <i>Celebrate!</i>

Helpful Hints

- Always practice or model an activity first.
- Plan ahead:
 - *Where will students move?*
 - *Which students will work well together?*
 - *Which students will need the most help?*
- Use consistent attention signals.



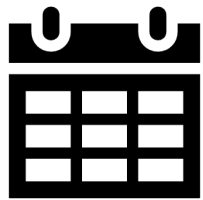
In this session, we learned...



...the *benefits* of small group instruction.



...the *options* for small group instruction.



...how to *plan for* and *implement* small group instruction.



References

- Poole, I., Evertson, C., & the IRIS Center. (2019). Effective room arrangement: Elementary. Retrieved from https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wpcontent/uploads/pdf_case_studies/ics_effrmarr_elementary.pdf
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AMERICAN ENGLISH

Reflection Questions

1. If you are trying to increase the amount of group work used in your classes, which tips from today's webinar can you apply in the near future? What modifications might you need to make?
2. How can you make use of underutilized spaces or new furniture arrangements in your classroom—and beyond—to conduct group activities?
3. Which suggestions from the webinar, such as practicing routines, modeling, planning groups and work locations in advance, and using consistent attention signals, might improve group work implementation in your classes?



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